

Matts Top Tips

MATTS TOP TIPS FOR TREE CARE

Some trees, despite their beauty and usefulness need to be removed as they are in the wrong place, and/or create a hazard. However, most trees on your property are an asset, visually and for many other reasons. They contribute to the quality of air, deflect sunlight and reduce the risk of skin cancer. They can reduce noise level and create windbreaks as well as contributing to erosion control and supporting wildlife and of course they keep you cool. What most people are not aware of is how trees get sick and die. Mostly trees take years to die after injury or infection, we hardly know how it happened. To help you look after your trees better the following hints should add years and years of life to your trees as well as make them more beautiful and above all, safer.

STOCK:

A considerable percentage of tree failure (especially in storms) is a result of having planted poor stock. It is important to get good advice on what to look for in the root system as well as stems and branches.

ROOTS:

It is estimated that 90% of tree problems have their origin in the root system. It is therefore important to know and care for this aspect of your trees. Generally insects or disease will only strike when your tree is weakened, and mostly this occurs through compromised root systems. Here are some basic do's and don'ts:

EXPOSED ROOTS:

Cars and/or lawn mowers and pedestrians constantly injure the roots, which will create infections in the tree, which in turn will result in slow die back in the crown.

REMEDY: Cover with soil or mulch. SOIL NEVER MORE THAN 1cm DEEP, MULCH NEVER MORE THAN 7cms DEEP.

CUT ROOTS:

To be on the safe side one should not cut roots thicker than 1 cm in diameter.

REMEDY: Not really. If you do have to cut make sure it is a clean cut so as to allow optimal healing.

TOO WET:

Heavy over watering trees (especially Eucalyptus) can kill fairly swiftly.

REMEDY: Obvious

TOO DRY

In times of drought we water all of our shrubs and flowers but mostly forget our trees. A tree might rarely die from drought but it is those times that insects and disease strike because the tree is weak. Death or decline might only occur years later.

REMEDY: Water cautiously - see above.

LACK OF OXYGEN:

Trees, like us, are highly dependant on oxygen and mostly draw it out of the soil. If the root zone is even partially covered with more than 1 cm of soil it changes the oxygen intake of the tree for the worse. A common cause for decline or death often comes from concreting and/or paving around trees or raising of soil levels in the root zone. Even simple compaction around trees from cars driving over the root zone can have a negative effect over time because oxygen gets cut off from that part of the root system.

REMEDY: Talk to an Arborist if you are planning any building work near a tree you would like to keep in good health. It really pays in the long term.

FERTILISING/POISONING:

Be over careful with fertilising and poisoning anywhere near tree root systems. Washing out the cement mixer can make a tree quite sick or even kill it.

TRUNK:

Many trees suffer badly from repeated whipper snipper damage. Keep safe distance from trunk and roots.

The art of tree care for the lay person is mostly what you don't do, rather than what you do. If you follow these guidelines you trees will thank you for it.

ENJOY YOUR TREES